



# *China and the Arctic*

*AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE U.S.*

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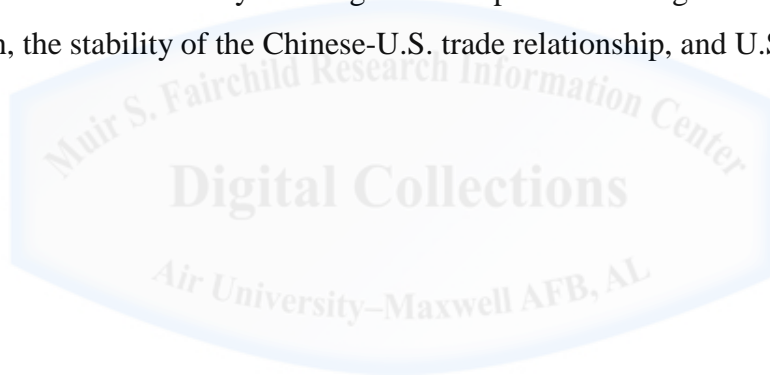
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## **Abstract**

As the environment changes, access to the vast resources of the Arctic will be required for nations to maintain and grow their populations. China in particular is likely to be affected by a changing climate and actively seeks access to resources such as hydrocarbons, minerals, and fish available in the Arctic. China needs these resources to maintain its economic growth and development and consequently legitimize and sustain the power of the ruling CCP. China actively forms business and scientific partnerships to further access the Arctic. A major obstacle to China's Arctic access is Russia. Russia's Arctic littoral nation status, control of Arctic sea routes, and general belligerence on a global front obstruct China's ability to secure the resources it needs. The United States security and partnerships are also affected by Russian belligerence. It is advantageous for the United States to leverage its position as an Arctic littoral nation in order to provide China Arctic access while simultaneously limiting Russian power. Doing so will maintain China's economic growth, the stability of the Chinese-U.S. trade relationship, and U.S. global security.



## ***Introduction***

The Arctic is a cold, desolate, unforgiving place. Yet for many centuries, nations sought to exploit it for the riches it may provide. Sea routes, mineral wealth, and fisheries may provide a new wealth to those who control it. The People's Republic of China (PRC or China) is seeking to exploit the resources in the Arctic in its quest to maintain the stability of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) through continuous economic growth. Specifically, the agenda of China for the future states the Arctic offers items of national interest China needs in fulfilling its goals. Nevertheless, there are obstacles limiting China's access to the Arctic. Russian control of much of the Arctic is major obstacle to China's Arctic access. Through examination of Chinese needs for economic stability and the global need for international partnerships to rebuke a belligerent Russian government, evidence will show the United States has a unique opportunity to utilize its position as an Arctic littoral nation by partnering with China to simultaneously grant China Arctic access and counter Russian belligerence in the as yet undefined "global commons" of the Arctic.

## ***China's "Grand Strategy"***

To understand China's agenda in the Arctic, it is necessary to zoom out, and look at China's grand strategy. Scholars agree internal stability is the driver of its grand strategy. The CCP can continue to stay in power as long the economy keeps growing.<sup>1</sup> With a global and diversified economy driving economic growth, China's foreign policy supports this grand strategy. China defines their overall foreign policy objectives as: "...first, China's political stability; second, sovereign security, territorial integrity and national unification; and third, China's sustainable economic and social development."<sup>2</sup> The Chinese economy has grown through international trade and economic policy geared toward growth. By building an international economy,

interdependence with other economies developed. For example, the U.S. - China economies are closely tied as China is our second largest trading partner, and third largest exporting partner.<sup>3</sup> As a result of China's meteoritic economic growth, China gained influence over its neighbors and trading partners who fear losing their economic standing if they politically oppose China.<sup>4</sup> This economic growth also created a population supportive of the CCP due to the prosperity it brought to them.<sup>5</sup> The opportunities offered by the Arctic, including trade routes and resources, will help the CCP stay in power by sustaining economic growth.

### ***China's Arctic Debate***

Unlike the US and Russia, according to a statement made by the Chinese assistant minister of foreign affairs to an Arctic forum in Norway, "China does not have an Arctic strategy"<sup>6</sup>, it has these interests: Climate change and its impact to agricultural production and coastal cities, access to shipping routes at a "reasonable" cost, and access to resources.<sup>7</sup> All three are economically related, and do not refer to a *historical sovereign claim* or aim for an intangible measure of national success such as *prestige*. Due to the current natural and geopolitical barriers between China and the Arctic and other more near term Chinese national goals, a Chinese Arctic strategy has not been "formulated or promulgated".<sup>8</sup> China does not place a high enough priority on the development of a Chinese Arctic strategy.<sup>9</sup> While China may not have a formally stated Arctic position, this does not mean Chinese scholars and media do not discuss Arctic strategy.

Chinese scholars actively debate what China's strategy should be concerning the Arctic. Chinese interest in the Arctic, outside academic research, was sparked in 2007 when Russia planted a Russian Flag at the North Pole<sup>10</sup>. Investment by the Chinese government in Arctic research helps shape the national plan. Advising policymakers about polar issues and providing policy recommendations drives Chinese research.<sup>11</sup> Some research is published and presented at

conferences concerning both the Arctic and climate change while other research, such as the comprehensive Arctic Issues Research project involving both Chinese scholars and officials, was not made public.<sup>12</sup> Guo Peiqing of the Ocean University of China states of China's verdant research as "any country that lacks comprehensive research on Polar politics will be excluded from being a decisive power in the management of the Arctic and therefore be forced into a passive position."<sup>13</sup> While Chinese academia have no consensus to *what* China's strategy should be toward the Arctic, academic writings are nested into the grand strategy theme of economic growth and stability.<sup>14</sup> With no formal strategy and policy concerning the Arctic, China's academic research does deliver a common message in diplomatic and public engagements: The Arctic belongs to the world, not to a few. Academics argue the Arctic is a global common and China has a "right to speak up", but academics are also realists aware of the lack of China's sovereignty in the Arctic.<sup>15</sup> Most academic writings focus on China's need to voice an opinion concerning sea routes, natural resources, and the need for the Arctic region to be open to all.<sup>16</sup> They fear any international institutions governing the Arctic are western-based in thinking and this does not favor China. While not an official statement, a Chinese Navy Admiral reasoned with 20% of the world's population, China is entitled to 20% of the Arctic's resources.<sup>17</sup> China's interest aligns with Chinese academics: "the Chinese government has taken steps to protect what it perceives as China's key interests in the Arctic, which are: (a) to strengthen its capacity to prepare appropriate responses to the effects that climate change in the Arctic will have on food production and extreme weather; (b) to ensure access at a reasonable cost to Arctic shipping routes; and (c) to strengthen its ability as a non-Arctic state to access resources and fishing waters."<sup>18</sup> This interest can be equated to using the Arctic to create the conditions necessary for continued economic growth. At the root of maintaining Chinese interests lies the



obstacle of climate change and the environmental changes expected to accompany global warming.

### ***Chinese Interests in the Arctic***

In order to continue a brisk rate of economic growth, China anticipates needs to overcome the consequences of future global climate change. Polar Regions are likely to show the first environmental consequences as a result of climate change. In order to best understand the consequences of global warming, China's academics have long engaged in avid polar research. China established a polar institute to further scientific studies in both poles. It should be noted the majority of Chinese scientific interests focus on the Antarctic, and not the Arctic.<sup>19</sup> Currently, Arctic research only accounts for one-fifth of China's polar studies.<sup>20</sup> China formed international partnerships with other nations interested in monitoring Arctic climate and environmental changes then established research centers both in the Arctic itself and around China.<sup>21</sup> Studying climate change and the Arctic will enable scholars to predict consequences to the environment, and potential effects on Chinese food sources.

The changes in climate as a result of global warming and the melting of Arctic ice predict adverse effects for China's agriculture. Specifically, increased flooding and extreme weather threaten China's food security.<sup>22</sup> Diminished food supplies would directly counter China's quest to maintain and grow their prosperity because it would create an unstable environment for its population/labor force, its industry, and therefore, its economy. Popular acceptance of the CCP and its one party rule ideology would be severely tested if turmoil and disorder ensued.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, China's interests in the impact of climate change on agriculture and coastlines is directly related to the thought a nourished society will be stable and maintain China's one-party system.

A reliable source of a protein rich food source for a 1.37 billion populace will offer China stability and legitimacy to the CCP. The changing global ocean temperatures and pollution caused a collapse in fish stocks in China's coastal oceans. Low fishing stocks combined with increased demand for fish from a growing, wealthier Chinese population led China to expand its distant-water fishing fleet and invest in overseas fisheries.<sup>24</sup> Chinese interest in fishing the Central Arctic Ocean (CAO) is increasing as warmer waters resulted in fish not previously found in Arctic regions thriving there. As a government system keen to "keep its people happy"<sup>25</sup>, the CCP must pay attention to its fishing industries access to the Arctic. Five Arctic littoral states (Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia, and the United States) developed the "Declaration Concerning the Prevention of Unregulated High Seas Fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean" during closed scientific meetings outside the normal channels of Arctic diplomacy.<sup>26</sup> The U.S. inclusion and Chinese exclusion at this type of meeting demonstrates the U.S. position it can leverage with China concerning Arctic access and policy. Very little is known about the types of fish and ecosystems found in the CAO deep; nevertheless China can use their research capabilities to explore the CAO and demonstrate willingness to both protect as well as explore the Arctic collaboratively.<sup>27</sup> This will assist China in gaining access to Arctic fisheries and sustain the popular demand for fish. Consequently, accessing a vast food supply will sustain the CCP's power in China because its populace will accept CCP's one party system. CCP economic policies aiming toward becoming a developed nation will be legitimized by lifting Chinese out of poverty.

CCP's ability to grow the economy and lift the nation from a developing one to a developed one determines the continuation of power. While China's poverty rate significantly dropped since 1990 according to World Bank poverty statistics<sup>28</sup>, a close look at the data shows approximately 27 million Chinese live at or below USD 1.90 per day and more than 152 million Chinese live at or below USD 3.10 per day. Their economy is still not a consumption driven economy, but an export driven economy. As a top exporter, an economical route through the Northwest Passage (NWP) or Northern Sea Route (NSR) would enable China to further grow, or at a minimum, sustain its economic growth. Connecting the east with the west, both routes begin



Figure 1 Arctic Sea Routes

through the Bering Strait then diverge along Canada and Greenland or along the Russian coast toward the Scandinavia<sup>29</sup> (Figure 1<sup>30</sup>). These shipping routes could potentially reduce the cost and time of maritime shipping. They would negate the Suez and Panama Canals, and the dangerous and congested waters of the Straits of Malacca. Navigating the NSR rather than southern routes is proposed to be safer from piracy.<sup>31</sup> The Arctic routes would avoid strategic choke points such as the Mandeb Strait<sup>32</sup>, and for oil coming out of the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz. Utilizing the NSR to Europe rather than the Suez Canal and Strait of Malacca shortens

the trip by 6400 km.<sup>33</sup> The NSR reduces sailing time by a week and saves an estimate of USD 600,000 per vessel per trip.<sup>34</sup> While the immediate ability to capitalize on the NSR does not seem feasible, China must secure access to this route to remain a competitive exporter and continue its economic growth. Nearly half of China's GDP relied on shipping at the turn of the century.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, Arctic sea routes would avoid or bypass a potential regional challenger, India, in the Indian Ocean if the China-India border dispute tensions escalated. Based on cost and strategic interest, Arctic routes are *extremely* beneficial to the Chinese economy and its growth, as well as enabling access to the natural resources the Arctic provides.

In order to keep the economy growing, China requires continuous access to natural resources. The Arctic offers access to hydrocarbons circumventing strategic or unstable chokepoints such as the Strait of Malacca or the Strait of Hormuz. China's access to the Arctic aims to exploit the energy resources located within the Arctic Circle. A 2008 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) worldwide petroleum assessment claims the Arctic contains 30% of undiscovered hydrocarbons, and 9% of coal and other critical economically minerals.<sup>36</sup> This international survey led by the USGS, projected 84% of these unclaimed hydrocarbon reserves are offshore.<sup>37</sup> China currently lacks deep sea drilling technology, but has the economic might to partner with technologically capable countries such as the United States, Russia, and Norway to accomplish the extraction of hydrocarbons from the Arctic. In March 2015, China invested USD 15 billion to finance a liquefied natural gas plant in cooperation with Russian natural gas producer Novatek.<sup>38</sup> In exchange, China received a 20% stake in the company and contracts for gas deliveries.<sup>39</sup> However, the Novatek project is based on year-round use of the NSR.<sup>40</sup> By investing early in the Novatek project, the CCP hedges future economic growth on an alternative source of a hydrocarbon. This hedge will provide China continuous access to hydrocarbons needed to

sustain economic growth. Consequently, economic growth provides economic opportunities for the populace as well as the stability and legitimacy of the CCP's one party system.

As well as hydrocarbons, the Arctic offers other accessible natural resources to support a growing economy, and the sustainment of the CCP's one party system. Greenland contains deposits of rare earth minerals as well as iron, titanium, coal, nickel, and uranium. As a consequence of the Arctic climate change, and as a result of China's strategic need to keep its economy growing, Chinese companies are investing in Greenland. In Greenland, a British owned mining company is developing an iron ore mine with Chinese steel maker financing.<sup>41</sup> NFC<sup>42</sup>, signed a memorandum of agreement with the Danish company Greenland Mineral and Energy to refine mined resources, especially uranium, in the Kuannersuit region. Additionally, U.S. scientists claim the Arctic's ocean floor crust is chemically different than other oceans.<sup>43</sup> This claim stated the Arctic floor was the only place globally where enriched scandium can be found.<sup>44</sup> Currently scandium is only available as byproduct of other mining operations, and therefore not cost effective for extensive industrial use.<sup>45</sup> Scandium has a high melting point and low density, and can serve as a superior alloying agent allowing Scandium's industrial use in the aerospace industry.<sup>46</sup> As China continues to develop its commercial and military aircraft, viable access to this mineral will bring a value added to industrial output, potentially increase market share, and increase the gross domestic product (GDP) metric. A growth in GDP further promotes the CCP's power and legitimacy in China.

China's agenda in the Arctic is directly linked to the CCP's requirement to continue China's GDP growth in order to keep stability and legitimacy. Studying and partnering alone do not secure China's access to the Arctic. Other nations have similar interests, as well as sovereignty

in the Arctic. Therefore, China must address these geopolitical obstacles in order to access the Arctic's riches.

### ***Obstacles to Chinese Access to the Arctic***

China's lack of a sovereign claim within the Arctic region stands in the way of China's ability to access the Arctic and all it offers. Several demarcations exist to define the Arctic, and China is not part of any of these definitions.<sup>47</sup> China does not have a coast in the Arctic Ocean, it does not have territory on or above the Arctic Circle, and does not have any territory along climatological lines defining the Arctic region (tree line and 10° Celsius July Isotherm). If control of the Arctic was given to littoral nations with claims to the Arctic Ocean continental shelf, 88% of the Arctic Ocean would be under the control of Russia, Denmark (Greenland), Norway, Canada, and the United States.<sup>48</sup> China does not have a sovereign claim in the Arctic area, but membership in the Arctic Council allows China to manifest national interests.

The creation of The Arctic Council ("Council") in 1996 as an inter-governmental alliance aims to promote cooperation between nations with territory (sovereign nations) and/or *interests* (China and other non-Arctic nations) in the Arctic on matters such as development and environmental protection. The eight full member nations are Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States along with six organizations representing indigenous people of the Arctic.<sup>49</sup> Chairmanship of the Council rotates every two years among the eight member nations.<sup>50</sup> In 2013, China was granted permanent observer status to the Arctic Council along with Japan, India, Italy, Singapore, and South Korea.<sup>51</sup> The observer status for China et al. was not only approved 17 years after the creation of the Council, but after smaller European nations<sup>52</sup> received observer status between 1998 and 2006. To be accepted as an observer nation, a nation needs to abide by certain criteria, including respecting Arctic

nations' sovereign claims and the Law of the Sea.<sup>53</sup> As an observer on the Arctic Council, China's interest in the region raised strategic concerns, opportunities, and challenges to Arctic nations.<sup>54</sup> China's observer status allows it to contribute at the working group level, submit statements, and propose agenda topics.<sup>55</sup> The Council currently has six working groups focused on pollution, ecosystem, emergency response, and sustainable development of the Arctic.<sup>56</sup> It can only be inferred China influences these working groups since reports from the Council's working groups discuss the region and not countries specifically. China needs to overcome individual members of the Arctic Council's concern about China's influence and ambition in the Arctic. Specifically, China must overcome Russia's historical distrust as Russia is a sovereign Arctic nation with superior access and role in the Arctic Council.

### ***Chinese-Russian Conflict***

China's access to the Arctic area via Russia is a mix of suspicion and apprehension.<sup>57</sup> Russia has long standing territorial disputes with China. Russian-Chinese relations have been strained by 'minor' but repeated snubs such as Russian refusal to accept Chinese phraseology regarding World War II events, Russian refusal to present a united front with China towards Japan regarding territorial rights as well as Russia feeling the need to shift military defenses from Europe to its Asian border.<sup>58</sup> Even though China and Russia signed an agreement in 2005 finalizing their demarcation of their frontier and agreeing to hold joint military exercises, "their relationship seems to have become increasingly complex."<sup>59</sup> Russia has a strategic concern with the growth of China's regional power and seeks to offset this power rise by attempting to contain it via bilateral agreements with Japan. Furthermore, bilateral agreements with Japan allow Russia to maintain an equitable balance of power vis-à-vis China whose GDP surpassed Russia by four fold.<sup>60</sup> While the natural gas field exploitation partnership between China National



Petroleum Corporation and Novatek in the Russian Yamal region provides China with a 20 percent ownership in the partnership, it more importantly gives China an economic presence in the Russian Arctic. However, the possibility Russia might impose unreasonable fees to transit their territorial water or charge for icebreakers as well as search-and rescue leaves uneasiness in China's power circle.<sup>61</sup> Russia seeks to capitalize on their Arctic geography. These penalties would negate the benefits of the NSR and constrain the Chinese economy if other economic rivals received beneficial treatment. Consequently, China's rising hegemony in the region versus Russia would be curtailed if it could not sustain or grow its economy. Russia's Arctic sphere poses a challenge to China's regional hegemony and ultimately the stability of the CCP.

### ***Russian Gamesmanship***

Russia has considerably the best Arctic geography and control of resources in the Arctic and will use this position to challenge China's rising regional hegemony. Russia's territory and population in the Arctic are the largest in the World. The Arctic accounts for 11% of Russia's GDP and 22% of Russia's total exports.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, to emphasize the strategic and economic importance of the Russian Arctic, it published the "Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and National Security for the Period up to 2020". The title of the document indicates Russia's attempt to foster Arctic development and maintain national security.<sup>63</sup> At present, the time period covered by this document is nearing an end and the strategy will be revised. Russia published plans to establish new Arctic military units and upgrade Arctic military facilities but appears to be struggling in fulfilling these plans under the original time frame due to slow infrastructural investment.<sup>64</sup> While China and Russia have settled border disputes, and forged economic ties in the exploitation of Arctic resources, Russia



is using the Arctic as a tool to contain China's interest in the region, and therefore attempting to negate China's regional rise as well as indirectly limit the CCP's power.

Russia uses its Arctic Council status, and Arctic naval power in an attempt to negate China's regional rise. Russia invited Chinese ships to their main base at Vladivostok with the intention of impressing the Chinese (and discouraging them) with the Russian naval military power.<sup>65</sup> Along with this display of naval power in the Arctic, Russia supported Japan's bid for observer status on the Council, but did not support China's bid. Russia does not limit its aggressive behavior to China, nor within the Arctic Circle.

Russia's belligerent behavior on a global scale is driven by the loss of its "empire" after the demise of the Soviet Union and the personal goal of Vladimir Putin to re-establish Russia as a power on the world stage; consequently challenging the current world order. Russia, in the past several years, demonstrated an aggressive behavior by annexing sovereign territory (Crimea), clandestine operations in Ukraine, violating a 1987 cruise missile treaty, deploying an antagonistic air defense posture in Kaliningrad, as well as inserting itself in the Syrian civil war. Could Putin look east and re-ignite a border conflict with China to re-establish a Russian "Empire" and both simultaneously expand world power as well as curtail the legitimacy of the CCP?

Russian assertion of power concerning regional disputes through geopolitical and diplomatic gamesmanship in the Arctic represents China's dominant obstacle in securing sea routes and resource access in the Arctic. However, relations with Russia are not the only obstacle to China's ability to access the opportunities the Arctic offers; the treaty governing the Arctic waters is another obstacle.

## ***China and UNCLOS***

To sustain or grow its economy, China needs to navigate the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) concerning the Arctic region. However, China has a dilemma. How can China dually claim sovereignty in the South China Sea, while disregarding the sovereign rights of bordering Arctic nations such as Canada and Russia? The majority of states with an interest in the Arctic view the NSR as an international waterway subject to international agreements. Not surprisingly, Russia disagrees with this viewpoint and sees the NSR as part of its domestic infrastructure with the straits being considered as internal waters.<sup>66</sup> Article 234 in UNCLOS supporting Russia's rights to the waters:

*Coastal States have the right to adopt and enforce non-discriminatory laws and regulations for the prevention, reduction and control of marine pollution from vessels in ice-covered areas within the limits of the exclusive economic zone, where particularly severe climatic conditions and the presence of ice covering such areas for most of the year create obstructions or exceptional hazards to navigation, and pollution of the marine environment could cause major harm to or irreversible disturbance of the ecological balance<sup>67</sup>*

Furthermore, former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper indicated he would oppose Arctic outsiders' attempts to gain influence in the Arctic.<sup>68</sup> Arctic council nations will likely use environmental protection as justification for excluding outsiders from utilizing Arctic resources.<sup>69</sup> China argued historical claims in the South China Sea are "grandfathered" and therefore exempted from UNCLOS.<sup>70</sup> Arctic nations can use the same argument against China's access to the Arctic. Therefore, China must use diplomacy and current economic strength to achieve access to the Arctic and further advance economic goals to sustain the CCP's power.

China demonstrated the use of diplomacy and economic strength to circumvent obstacles in 2011, when a Chinese research agency was the first organization to successfully navigate the

complexity of the current UNCLOS treaty to obtain a permit from the International Seabed Authority for mineral exploration in the Indian Ocean. While not in the Arctic, this success reflects the skill and agility of a Chinese organization to maneuver in the complicated UNCLOS legal and diplomatic environment.<sup>71</sup> China must apply the same diplomatic agility to form strong partnerships to access the Arctic.

### ***Chinese Partnerships***

China uses bilateral contact with many Arctic nations to advance common interests, advance economic growth, and therefore, the legitimacy of the CCP. For example, Iceland has a free trade agreement with China. Iceland exports fish, and a Chinese company received rights for oil exploration in Iceland's territorial waters. China has a research station in the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard to study environmental changes in the Arctic. Canada and China engaged in bilateral discussion on the Arctic, and so have the United States and China. China invites and includes foreign scientists to participate in all of their Arctic research expeditions.<sup>72</sup> Not being a full-member of the Arctic Council forced China to take the approach of gaining influence through investing with companies from Arctic Council member nations as well as working in multinational Arctic research.<sup>73</sup>

China's message, in unison with other non-arctic states, demands the Arctic be treated as a global "common" with resources being available to all and not the "private property" of the Arctic littoral states.<sup>74</sup> Chinese officials choose to emphasize the global implications of events occurring in the Arctic, especially climate change shown to impact nations outside the Arctic Circle. China argues, as a result of being affected by the Arctic's changing environment, it should have a voice in determining the future of the Arctic.<sup>75</sup> "China's activities are for the purposes of regular environmental investigation and investment and have nothing to do with

resource plundering and strategic control,” the state-controlled Xinhua news agency wrote in 2012.<sup>76</sup> This message aligns with the strategy to grow or sustain the Chinese economy and reduce threats to the legitimacy of the CCP. Maintenance of the Chinese economy and government is important to the U.S and Northeast Asian nations as well due to global economic dependency.

The U.S. - China economies are closely tied as China with USD 104 billion of U.S. goods heading to China in 2009.<sup>77</sup> Due to its safety and liquidity, China holds USD 1.3 trillion in our public debt, favoring the U.S. Government because of lowered borrowing cost. China invested USD 14 billion (2013) in U.S. companies and created U.S. jobs. China further maintains ties with other Northeast Asian states (Japan and South Korea) through common Arctic ideology and export-driven economies, as well as energy importers.

China and the Northeast Asian states share the ideology the Arctic governance should include non-Arctic nations.<sup>78</sup> As export driven economies, all would benefit from shorter shipping routes. China leased port access on the Sea of Japan from North Korea, and South Korea sent logistics representative to the same port to evaluate commercial opportunities since the port could become the eastern Rotterdam.<sup>79</sup> Shipping through Russian controlled Arctic would impose additional costs on all nation since Russian law states all ships traveling through the NSR require a Russian ice pilot, and/or an ice breaker escort.<sup>80</sup> All Northeast Asian states are importers of hydrocarbons, and would benefit from reliable, and geographically closer, access to the Arctic resources. Along with Chinese investment in the Arctic’s hydrocarbon resources, a South Korean company invested with a Canadian company in exploration of hydrocarbon in the Arctic.<sup>81</sup> China and South Korea jointly engage in Arctic scientific research including both having ice breakers fitted for scientific research.<sup>82</sup> South Korea and China share

interest in access to the Arctic.<sup>83</sup> Like China, Japan shares concerns about Russia's motives in the Arctic.<sup>84</sup> Consequently, partnering with the U.S. could allow China and Northeast Asian countries to develop a shared strategy toward the Arctic, capitalizing on U.S. diplomacy and leverage of the U.S position as an Arctic littoral nation. This partnership would not only decrease Russian economic expectation in the Arctic, but also further isolate Russia globally.

### ***United States' Arctic Position***

The United States shares concerns with China such as access to Arctic resources, freedom of navigation, environmental change, and Russia monopolizing the Arctic. The U.S. position as an Arctic littoral state provides the U.S. with an opportunity to leverage our position in the Arctic in order to curb Russia's belligerent behavior. The United States Arctic official security strategy is the guidance we must use to partner with China to leverage against Russian belligerent behavior.

The United States' official Arctic strategy has three lines of efforts and four guiding principles<sup>85</sup>:

- Lines of Effort: 1) Advance United States security interests 2) Pursue responsible Arctic region stewardship 3) Strengthen international cooperation
- Guiding Principles: 1) Safeguard peace and stability 2) Make decisions using the best available information 3) Pursue innovative arrangements 4) Consult and coordinate with Alaskan natives

Because, China joined the Arctic Council, signed UNCLOS, and joined the International Arctic Science Committee in order to be a member of the cooperative international community, invested in scientific and academic research in order to guide national policy decisions with best available information, signed the UN Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples

(Mongolian tribes share commonalities with Arctic indigenous people and are members of Arctic indigenous people's associations)<sup>86</sup>, and engages in direct diplomacy with Arctic nations, China's actions reflect similarities to the U.S. Arctic strategy. With so many similar interests in the Arctic, it is sensible for the U.S to leverage deep relationships with other nations (specifically Canada) to achieve mutual security and economic benefits.

As a full Arctic Council member, the U.S. is able to utilize its position and relationships with other Arctic NATO and European countries to establish an alternative to Russia's geographical position thus creating more advantageous economic opportunities for China and European countries, and blunting Russian belligerent behavior. As a result, U.S. economic stability and global security will be maintained. For example, the U.S. could leverage its relationship with Canada to grant China and other Northeast Asian nation's access to the Northwest Passage as an alternative to the NSR.

Our relationship with Canada is un-paralleled in the world. We are each other's largest trading partners, and share the security of North America. Canada disagrees with the rest of the world concerning the Northwest Passage (The United States views the Northwest Passage as a strait falling under international navigation law while Canada views the passage as an internal waterway (similar to Russia's NSR policy)).<sup>87</sup> U.S. et al. argues this passage is vital for international navigation, and therefore not territorial waters, as custom to international law.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, the U.S. must leverage this un-paralleled friendship to negate the benefits of Russia's Arctic geography, and offer a mutually beneficial alternative to the NSR to China (and other Northeast Asian nations) via a resolution concerning the Northwest Passage. Benefits of such action include continued economic prosperity for China and the U.S. and increased global

security as a result of isolating Russia. China does not pose a threat to the U.S. in the Arctic, but Russia's overall belligerent behavior does pose a risk globally.<sup>89</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Due to the global dependency of U.S.-China-Northeast Asian economies, and a shared suspicion of Russia's geopolitical motives, the United States can and must leverage its position as an Arctic littoral state to isolate Russia and curb Russian belligerent behavior. China demonstrated its willingness to invest, work, research, and partner with the U.S. as well as other nations to satisfy national interest. China does not pose a threat to the U.S. in the Arctic, but Russia's overall belligerent behavior does pose a risk globally.<sup>90</sup> The Arctic offers a new area for partnership between Washington and Beijing, in pursuit of mutual goals and national interests. A stable China, and therefore CCP's power and legitimacy, would be endangered if it lacked access to the resources in the Arctic as environmental change affects the status quo. An unstable China or failing CCP leadership would negatively impact the U.S. - China intertwined economies. The U.S. must leverage its Arctic state status to responsibly remove obstacles between China and the Arctic in order to benefit both nations. In doing so, China will gain access to the Arctic and its resources and the U.S. will have weakened a power-hungry Russia that threatens global security. A stable and prosperous China benefits the United States' national interest.



## End Notes

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- <sup>29</sup> <http://maritime-connector.com/images/northern-sea-route-and-suez-canal-route-7-flagsmaps-22506.jpg>
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- <sup>31</sup> Russia’s Strategic Concerns in the Arctic and Its Impact on Japan-Russia Relations, 95
- <sup>32</sup> Key Strait to Red Sea, Suez Canal, and consequently to Eurasian markets



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- <sup>50</sup> Ibid.
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- <sup>52</sup> The United Kingdom, France, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, and Spain became Arctic Council observers prior to China. Ibid.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>54</sup> I use the Arctic council members as Arctic Nations
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- <sup>58</sup> Hyodo, "Russia's Strategic Concerns in the Arctic and Its Impact on Japan-Russia Relations," 98-99.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., 97.
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